



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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November 14, 2001

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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From: Anita Bock, Director

**QUARTERLY REPORT RE: AUDITOR-CONTROLLER FAMILY PRESERVATION
RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is in response to your Board's motion of January 16, 2001 regarding the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the Auditor-Controller.

Please find attached updated quarterly report reflecting progress the Department has made regarding the Auditor-Controller's recommendations. Supporting documents will be available upon your request.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (213) 351-5883 or your staff may contact Michelle Saulters at (213) 351-5787.

AB:PVF
RRS:vm

Attachments

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUDITOR-CONTROLLER'S
REVIEW OF THE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

INTRODUCTION: This is the third update on the progress the Department has made in the implementation of the Auditor-Controller's recommendations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 1:

DCFS MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATE ITS SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM (FPP) BY PROVIDING STRONG LEADERSHIP AND BY INTEGRATING THE PROGRAM INTO THE DEPARTMENT'S CORE OPERATIONS.

We concur with this recommendation and our current management will address the following concerns within ninety days: Family Preservation units in each Region; Family Preservation Training for the Department of Children and Family Services' Children's Social Workers, Supervisors and Managers; improve the 800 referral process and address the distribution of auxiliary funds.

- **Family Preservation units have been established in each Department of Children and Family Services Region. Effective July 1, 2001 Department of Children and Family Services offices were aligned with the Service Planning Areas (SPA) and there is at least one Family Preservation unit in each SPA.**
- **A commitment was made by the Training section to have a Family Preservation training component incorporated into the Academy's curriculum.**
- **The Family Preservation Program staff have participated in the training for the new hires and the existing Children's Social Workers with the Inter-University Consortium in June, July and August 2001. We are scheduled to participate in training scheduled for November and December 2001.**
- **With the new base rate billing system for Family Preservation, the Department of Children and Family Services 800 form has been modified and it only generates the base rate payment. The Supplementary services are identified at the Multidisciplinary Case Planning Committee and they are reimbursed by invoice. Auxiliary funds are no longer budgeted per Department of Children and Family Services Region; they are now equally available to each office.**

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

RECOMMENDATION 2:

DCFS MANAGEMENT MUST IMPROVE ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH LEAD AGENCIES BY ESTABLISHING MORE FREQUENT AND COMPLETE COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE PROGRAM.

We concur with this recommendation and the Department will improve its partnership with lead agencies by conducting collaboration training workshops and all-day retreats annually. This will be implemented within six months.

- **We have worked with the Family Preservation/Family Support Commission Committee to convene a retreat. Our target date is December 2001.**

OUTCOME MEASURES

RECOMMENDATION 3:

DEVELOP FPP GOALS THAT ARE CLEAR AND MEASURABLE.

We concur with this recommendation and the Department is currently working with an Assistant Professor at the USC School of Social Work who has identified data to be collected by all lead agencies. This data will help develop measurable goals and outcomes for the Family Preservation Program. This information is being included in the Request for Proposal.

- **The Department is currently working with an Assistant Professor at University of Southern California School of Social work who has identified data to be collected by all of the lead agencies. A table indentifying the variables and domains to be collected by each agency was included in the Family Preservation Request for Proposal.**
- **The Family Preservation Program measurable goals are a contract requirement in the Family Preservation 2001-2003 contract as a task and deliverable.**

RECOMMENDATION 4:

ENSURE THAT THE PROCESS OF FPP DATA COLLECTION IS COMPLETED AND MAINTAINED IN THE FPP CHILD WELFARE SERVICES/CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM SPECIAL PROJECTS TAB.

We concur with this recommendation and to ensure that the process of Family Preservation Program data is collected and maintained, Family Preservation Program management has made modifications to the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) database to include Family Preservation services, types of services and start and stop dates of services.

- **On July 1, 2000, Revenue Enhancement began updating the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System database with all Family Preservation referrals to ensure that data is collected in CWS/CMS special projects tab. The database has been revised to collect information based on the new rate structure. The DCFS Community Development Coordinators fax the DCFS 800 forms to the Revenue Enhancement, Family Preservation Review Unit.**

RECOMMENDATION 5:

ENSURE THE RFP TO PROCURE AN EVALUATION OF FPP IS ISSUED.

We concur with this recommendation and the FPP has completed the Request for Proposal for Family Preservation Program Evaluation Services. The successful proposer will conduct a process and outcomes evaluation of the County's Family Preservation Program, including all 28 contracted Community Family Preservation Networks.

- **A Family Preservation Evaluation Request for Proposal was released on March 5, 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 6:

UTILIZE THE EVALUATION FINDINGS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE VARIABLES THAT INFLUENCE PROGRAM SUCCESS.

We concur with this recommendation and the Family Preservation Program management is currently working with Dr. Jacquelyn McCrosky, Dr. Barbara Solomon and all stakeholders to create a consistent format for all evaluations. This process is currently being implemented.

- **A standardized Assessment tool was created by Dr. Solomon, of the Inter-University Research Consortium with participation and input from the Community Family Preservation Networks, and Department of Children and Family Services Program and Technology staff. Dr. Solomon has trained all Community Family Preservation Networks on the use of the new Assessment tool. The training occurred in September 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 7:

INVOLVE LEAD AGENCIES IN UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND IN DETERMINING A COURSE OF ACTION TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM.

We concur with this recommendation and the Family Preservation Program staff will meet individually with each Community Family Preservation Network on a quarterly basis to update each agency on the results of audit reviews and work with them to make any improvements reflected in the audit report.

- **The program staff continues to provide technical assistance on a quarterly basis with the Family Preservation lead agencies to review questionable audit items and to assist in implementing a corrective action plan.**
- **As an addition to the Family Preservation Program staff, we included an Accountant position in our budget, to assist Program staff with budget issues Technical Assistance, and audit reviews.**

RECOMMENDATION 8:

COMMIT TO THE PERIODIC EVALUATION OF THE FPP AND ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE PROGRAM DATA IS ROUTINELY CAPTURED, ANALYZED AND USED TO MAKE PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS.

We concur with this recommendation and the Family Preservation Program staff, as stated in the aforementioned paragraph, will work closely with each Community Family Preservation Network to ensure appropriate data is captured to make program modifications.

- **Through the provision of Technical Assistance, Family Preservation Program staff will ensure that each lead agency is capturing data to construct future program modifications.**

RECOMMENDATION 9:

CLARIFY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ITS RECENT PLANS FOR A PROGRAM EVALUATION AND THE LEAD AGENCY EVALUATIONS.

We concur that clarification is needed for program evaluations and lead agency evaluations. The Family Preservation Program management will incorporate standardized evaluations for each lead agency to ensure extensive program data is collected to provide information on specific program areas and to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of program data. The evaluations from both the Department of Children and Family Services and the Lead Agencies will produce similar data in that the outcome measures of the Family Preservation Program will be identified. The Agency evaluation will be completed prior to the Department evaluation. Dr. Solomon has prepared the Agency evaluation and plans to hand off her work to the Department's evaluator.

- **Dr. Devon Brooks, Assistant Professor of University of Southern California, has identified a table of domains and variables to be collected by each lead agency in efforts to establish consistent and reliable data to measure program outcomes. This information was included in the Family Preservation Request for Proposal to be used by both the Lead Agency for self-evaluation and for the Department's research purposes. Dr. Brooks provided the framework for both research purposes.**
- **The Department of Children and Family Services program evaluation will use experimental or quasi-experimental design to assess County-wide program outcomes in the areas of child placement and safety (as required by the State) and in addition, overall functioning, including family and child functioning and well-being, family empowerment, and client satisfaction. However, the lead agencies' self-evaluations will be mainly Community Family Preservation Networks specific studies and will be used to generate on-going agency reports which may be useful to Community Family Preservation Networks in program planning and may facilitate program improvements.**

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATION 10:

REQUIRE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM STAFF TO REVIEW AND INCORPORATE ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE AUDITOR-CONTROLLER (AC) REPORT PRIOR TO FINALIZING THE FAMILY PRESERVATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

As the audit notes, we had recently convened a committee comprised of Family Preservation Program staff, Community Development Coordinators and lead agency staff to update the Policy and Procedures to reflect current practices. Before finalizing the Policy and Procedures, Family Preservation Program staff will review and provide

input to the document. This will ensure that our Department is consistent with operations. The process will be finalized within six months.

- **We concur with the recommendation and the process will be completed July 15, 2001.**
- **The policy is not in place as anticipated, as the Program staff has experienced a staffing shortage and we expect a draft policy to be in place by December 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 11:

CONSIDER THE ADVANTAGES OF CENTRALIZATION AND DETERMINE IF CENTRALIZED FPP UNITS IN EACH REGION COULD PRODUCE POSITIVE PROGRAM BENEFITS.

We concur with the recommendation and have called for Family Preservation Program operations to be centralized across our Department's eight SPAs. This will result in consistent interpretation and application of program operation. Furthermore, we have standardized the referral process by implementing case screening committees, front-end services, and court services for Family Preservation Program in all our regions. This will allow Children's Social Workers to refer from the Family Maintenance/Reunification Program and Emergency Response.

With the redesign of our front-end services in our new Bureau of Child Protection we expect to see a substantial rise in the number of Emergency Response cases referred to Family Preservation.

All regional offices will have a dedicated Family Preservation Program unit in which assigned Children's Social Workers will handle the Family Preservation Program cases. We believe that centralized Family Preservation Program units in each SPA will produce positive program benefits. This process will be finalized within six months.

- **As of June 1, 2001, each Department of Children and Family Services' SPA has centralized Family Preservation units.**

RECOMMENDATION 12:

REQUIRE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS (CDC) IN EACH REGION TO CONDUCT WEEKLY FPP CASE SCREENING COMMITTEES.

We concur with the recommendation and management will require each Community Development Coordinator to conduct a weekly Family Preservation Program case screening committee. This process will be effective immediately.

- **This process was implemented effective March 1, 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 13:

INCLUDE FPP AS A CORE MODULE IN TRAINING ACADEMIES PROVIDED TO NEWLY HIRED CSWs.

We concur with this recommendation and management will establish a formal Family Preservation Program training with the Department's Inter-University Consortium for Children's Social Workers, supervisors and managers. This process will be completed within six months.

- **The Training section has committed to include a Family Preservation training module for future hires. Program staff have participated in several training classes with the Inter-University Consortium in June, July, and August 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 14:

REQUIRE TRAINING ACADEMY STAFF, FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM STAFF AND CDCs TO WORK TOGETHER TO DEVISE A STANDARD TRAINING SCHEDULE.

We concur with this recommendation to develop a standardized training module for the Academy. In addition, the training committee will include personnel from the Training Academy, Family Preservation Program, Community Development Coordinator staff, and Community Family Preservation Networks who will work together to devise the module. A comprehensive approach will be used to provide core and enrichment training programs to Family Preservation workers at Department of Children and Family Services and Community Family Preservation Networks. Also, in-service training modules focusing on the knowledge and skills necessary for family preservation interagency collaboration will be developed and provided to managers, Supervising Children's Social Workers, Children's Social Workers, and selected staff from community networks. This process will be completed within nine months.

- **Although Training staff was not included, Family Preservation Program staff conducted a comprehensive training module for new and returning Community Family Preservation Networks on June 25, 2001. Another training/retreat is planned for December 2001.**

FPP AUTHORIZATION/REFERRAL

RECOMMENDATION 15:

DCFS MANAGEMENT SHOULD REVIEW THE FORM 800 APPROVAL POLICIES FOR CHANGES IN SERVICE LEVEL AND THE EXTENSION OF SERVICES AND DETERMINE IF ALL LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT APPROVALS ARE NECESSARY.

We concur with this recommendation and will eliminate the required signatures of the Assistant Regional Administrator and the Regional Administrator on the 800 form when changes and extension of services is required. This process will be completed within ninety days.

- **With the formulation of the base rate in the Request for Proposal, there is no longer a need for level changes as levels no longer exist and extensions will be authorized by the Supervising Children's Social Worker.**

- **Effective July 1, 2001 multiple signatures were eliminated on the revised 800 forms and in the Family Preservation Contracts.**

RECOMMENDATION 16:

DCFS MANAGEMENT REQUEST THAT REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COMPLY WITH DEPARTMENT POLICY REGARDING FORM 800 APPROVALS.

We concur with this recommendation. The elimination of certain required signatures mentioned above should expedite the extension process and increase compliance.

- **The Family Preservation program manager and the management of Internal Technology Systems revised the DCFS 800 form, effective July 1, 2001.**
- **The Request for Proposal eliminated the need for multiple approvals to generate Family Preservation services.**

RECOMMENDATION 17:

DCFS MANAGEMENT REQUIRE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER'S (CSWs) TO COMPLETE ONLY THE FORM 800 TO EXTEND SERVICES.

We concur with this recommendation and management will only require Children's Social Workers to complete the 800 forms for extension of services and will eliminate the supplemental document. This process will be completed within 90 days.

- **This has been implemented July 1, 2001.**

SERVICE MENUS

RECOMMENDATION 18:

DETERMINE THE REASONS WHY SO FEW OF THE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES ARE ACTUALLY BEING PROVIDED.

Combined response 18, 19, 20

RECOMMENDATION 19:

BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THIS ANALYSIS, DETERMINE IF THE CURRENT MENU OF SERVICES IS APPROPRIATE OR IF IT SHOULD BE REVISED

Combined response 18, 19, 20

RECOMMENDATION 20:

IF THE CURRENT MENU IS APPROPRIATE, ENSURE MCPC PARTICIPANTS CONSIDER THE BROAD RANGE OF SERVICES WHEN TAILORING A FAMILY'S CASE PLAN.

As the audit notes, many of the Auditor-Controller's recommendations are internal systematic changes that must be made with the Department. The Department has addressed the service delivery and the current menu of services by eliminating service levels in the rate payment structure. The Department has reviewed the service menu in conjunction with Stakeholders. We believe that full utilization of these services will occur. The base rate includes indirect costs (i.e., administrative), clinical director

services, multidisciplinary case planning committees, and the in-home counselor (four visits per month). The fee for service rates will be used for a menu of services that will be selected to meet the particular needs for each family. The menu of services include:

- In-Home Outreach Counseling (in excess of the basic 4 visits)
 - Counseling to include: substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, and teen pregnancy
 - Parenting Training
 - Self Help/Family Support Groups
 - In-Home Emergency Caretaker
 - Substitute Adult Role Model
 - Teaching and Demonstrating Homemaking
 - Transportation
 - Drug Testing
 - Child Focused Activities
 - Child Follow Up Observation
 - Discretionary Services/Items
 - Employment/Training Services
- **The Department of Children and Family Services will monitor the usage of these services to insure full utilization. The new base rate and fee for service rate structure is included in the Family Preservation Contract FY 2001-2003.**

CASE LEVELS

RECOMMENDATION 21:

MONITOR THE RELATIVE PERCENTAGE OF LEVEL I, II AND III CASES AND DETERMINE THE REASON (S) FOR THE TREND AND WHETHER SERVICE LEVELS ARE BEING APPROPRIATELY ASSIGNED.

We concur with the recommendation. The Department has addressed the concerns surrounding the assignment of service levels and has decided to replace this model with a fee for service structure plus a base rate for mandated services. These services are approved at the Multidisciplinary Case Planning Committee. A new rate structure will assist in monitoring trends and services. This procedure will be implemented in the RFP for 2001.

- **The rate level structure was eliminated with the advent of the 2001 FP RFP.**

RECOMMENDATION 22:

CONSIDER THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THREE DISTINCT LEVELS AND MODIFY THE NUMBER OF LEVELS IF APPROPRIATE.

We concur with the recommendation. The Department has addressed the concerns surrounding the appropriateness of service levels and has decided to replace this model with a base rate for mandated services and fee for additional services model.

- **July 1, 2001, the rate level structure was eliminated.**

PAYMENT RATES

RECOMMENDATION 23:

DCFS MANAGEMENT, AFTER IT HAS FINALIZED THE SERVICE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM MODEL:

- a) REVIEW THE CURRENT CAPITATED RATES TO DETERMINE IF THEY ADEQUATELY COMPENSATE LEAD AGENCIES FOR SERVICES PROVIDED.**
- b) CONSIDER ESTABLISHING A FEE-FOR-SERVICE RATE STRUCTURE IF THE NUMBER OF SERVICES IS LIMITED.**

We concur with the recommendation and the Department has addressed the service delivery and the current menu of services by eliminating the three service levels payment structure. A fee for service menu has been adopted and will be used with the base rate, as explained above.

- **A fee for service menu has been adopted in the Request for Proposal and the base rate is in place effective July 1, 2001.**

BUDGET

RECOMMENDATION 24:

REQUIRE BUDGET STAFF TO INCLUDE ALL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES IN THE FPP BUDGET, REGARDLESS OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EXPENDITURES ARE CLAIMED.

We concur with the recommendation. Family Preservation Management, Budget and Finance staff to have implemented this recommendation July 2001.

- **Implemented July 1, 2001.**

RECOMMENDATION 25:

CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DETERMINE IF THE PRESENT FUNDING LEVEL OF AUXILIARY FUNDS IS APPROPRIATE.

We concur with the recommendation of examining the appropriateness of the current funding level of auxiliary funds. This recommendation will be implemented within six months.

- **The funding issues regarding auxiliary payments have been reviewed and updated in the new RFP.**
- **Approximately \$1 million dollars has been reserved for auxiliary payments for FY 2001-2002.**

RECOMMENDATION 26:

EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ALLOCATING THE TOTAL AUXILIARY FUND BUDGET AMONG THE REGIONS, INCLUDING BASING THE ALLOCATION ON THE RELATIVE PERCENTAGE OF REFERRALS.

We support the recommendation of exploring alternative methods of allocating auxiliary funds including basing the allocation on the percentage of referrals by region. It is expected that this process will be reviewed and implemented during the six months.

- **A committee addressing this matter will convene by December 15, 2001 to explore alternative methods of allocating auxiliary funds.**

RECOMMENDATION 27:

ENSURE A CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRAM AND FINANCE STAFF IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FPP BUDGET.

We concur with the recommendation, and have implemented it in part. The Program and Finance staff hold quarterly team building meetings. It is expected that this recommendation will be discussed and implemented in full within the next six months.

- **Implemented.**
- **Effective July 1, 2001 each program manager is specifically responsible for managing their own budget in consultation with the Budget and Finance Divisions.**

RECOMMENDATION 28:

REQUIRE PROGRAM STAFF TO RELEASE THE DETAILS OF THE BUDGET TO LEAD AGENCIES ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

We concur with the recommendation. Family Preservation management will coordinate with Budget and Finance management to implement this recommendation within the next six months.

- **The lead agencies will be provided copies of the Family Preservation budget FY 2001-02 at the December 2001 Roundtable meeting and Program staff will continue to make this information available to Lead Agencies. Lead agencies received copies of the prior FP budget at the December 2000 Roundtable meeting.**

PROGRAM FUNDING

RECOMMENDATION 29:

REQUIRE STAFF TO KEEP FORMAL WAITING LISTS TO DETERMINE IF THE DEMAND FOR FPP SERVICES IS GREATER THAN OR LESS THAN AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

We concur with the recommendation. The Family Preservation program staff will develop and implement a procedure for capturing the demand for Family Preservation Services within the next six months.

- **The Family Preservation Program Evaluation will address the demand for FP services.**
- **We currently have approximately 75 families on waiting list for FP services and we are in the process of accessing 10% increase in funding for CFPNs to**

address the needs of families on waiting list. The target date for Contract amendments is December 1, 2001.

RECOMMENDATION 30:

ALLOCATE FPP FUNDING AMONG THE GEOGRAPHICAL SERVICE AREAS BASED ON THE ACTUAL NEED FOR SERVICES.

We concur with the recommendation and Family Preservation management currently allocates funds based on the number of children in out of home care within a geographic service area. The Department Children and Family Services will continue to evaluate alternative methods of funding, however at this time the Department believes that the present method is appropriate. If Department of Children and Family Services evaluates the Program and determines that certain populations have better success, future allocations will be based on this.

- **The Department believes that the present method is appropriate. When program research is available from the Family Preservation Evaluation Request for Proposal, Department of Children and Family Services will reevaluate the Program and determine if certain populations have better success, future allocations may be based on children in foster placement and poverty rates.**

RECOMMENDATION 31:

CONSIDER INCORPORATING PROGRAM CHANGES THAT RESULT FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT INTO THE RFP.

- **Recommendations were incorporated in the Family Preservation Program Request for Proposal as indicated in the responses above.**